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FOR A/S DAVID WELCH FROM AMBASSADOR UNTERMEYER

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KPAO](#) [QA](#) [ALJAZEERA](#)

SUBJECT: AL JAZEERA AND NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH QATAR

Classified By: Ambassador Chase Untermeyer, reasons 1.4 (b&d)

1. (S) I recently asked LGEN Mike Maples USA, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), to address this question: "Does Al Jazeera's reporting/commentary incite violence against the United States?" I did so because I have long heard that Al Jazeera's broadcasts do exactly this - or, worse, as then-DepSecDef Wolfowitz told me in February 2005, "Al Jazeera is killing Americans."

2. (S) In his reply to me of 17 Feb 06, LGEN Maples wrote that AJ "creates an environment of legitimacy for terrorists and appears to lend credibility to their international call for attacks on US homeland and US interests in the Middle East. As a result, this kind of skewed news coverage has the potential to incite anti-US violence among segments of the station's viewing audience."

3. (S) I agree with DIA's assessment and point out that its qualified wording ("creates an environment ... appears to lend credibility ... potential to incite") describes the degree to which Al Jazeera threatens US personnel and interests. In particular, DIA does not allege that Al Jazeera is killing Americans.

4. (S) LGEN Maples, letter added: "Recent data ... on Al Jazeera programming suggests a downward trend in such negative reporting. This may suggest that US efforts to get Al Jazeera to provide more balanced and objective coverage is having some positive effect."

5. (S) On the same day that LGEN Maples wrote me, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes arrived in Doha.

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She spent a complete morning at Al Jazeera, meeting with senior management and being interviewed. She said there and elsewhere, "As a communicator, I cannot ignore a station that reaches 40 million viewers." In her meeting with Qatari foreign minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim, U/S Hughes said of her meetings at Al Jazeera, "I told them we have seen some improvements but would like to see more."

6. (C) From the above I conclude that, while we still have major disagreements over Al Jazeera's coverage (particularly the showing of terrorist video tapes) and need to continue pressing for improvements, the issue of Al Jazeera alone should not stand in the way of normal relations with Qatar, a country that hosts almost 10,000 of our troops and allows us free and unfettered use of the vital Al Udeid Air Base.

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